

# From third plural to passive: incipient, emergent and established passives<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. Introduction

In comparison to the extensive literature on the synchronic properties of passives and the cross-linguistic variation that they exhibit, the sources of passive constructions have received relatively little attention. Consequently many questions pertaining to the developmental pathways of passives still remain open. Chief among them is the extent to which the cross-linguistic variation manifested among passives is attributable to the specificities of their source constructions. It is generally assumed that some properties of source constructions are likely to be lost early, others may persist longer and yet others may even be retained in well established passives. However little is known about the nature of the respective properties and the extent to which they are tied to a given type of source construction. Only an investigation of the developmental stages of passives stemming from different source constructions can throw light on the issue. As documented in particular by Haspelmath (1990, 1994) and Givón & Ranch (2006), the source constructions of passives are numerous and varied. They include: adjectival stative (resultative) constructions, serial verb constructions, causative/reflexive/middle constructions, nominalizations, zero anaphora, inverse constructions, ergative constructions and impersonal subject constructions. This paper will focus on the last of these, specifically on a subtype of impersonal subject constructions, namely third person plural impersonals (3pl IMPs).

3pl IMPs are constructions with a non-referential third person plural pronominal subject such as the English *they* in (1) or the verbal inflection in the Polish (2a).

- (1) a. They shoot horses, don't they?  
b. They say there's dragons guardin' the highsecurity vaults.

- (2) a. W niedziele nie przynoszą poczty.<sup>2</sup>  
on Sunday not bring:3PL mail  
“(There is) no mail on Sunday's.”

They are considered to be impersonal under the functional, agent defocusing view of impersonality which associates defocusing of an agent with loss of subject status and/or lack of full referentiality.<sup>3</sup> The non-referential subject of 3pl IMPs is typically interpreted as involving some human collective, for instance, people in general in (1a,b) or people employed by the postal service in (2a) or some other loosely specified set of individuals though crucially, excluding the speaker and addressee. The exclusion of the speaker and addressee from the range of humans encompassed by the nonreferential subject is what primarily differentiates 3pl IMPs from other impersonal constructions which express a nonreferential human subject such as those realized by either a pronominalized noun (e.g. *man* in German, *on* in French, *an/a* in Hausa) or an actual person form (e.g. 1pl or 2sg). Formally 3pl IMPs are nearly identical to constructions with a third person plural pronominal as subject. Nonetheless, they can be differentiated from the latter in two respects. First of all, the third person plural in the 3pl IMP lacks an overt antecedent in the preceding discourse while third person pronominal subjects are normally anaphoric. And secondly, the form of the third plural is typically a phonologically or morpho-phonologically reduced form as

opposed to a full form. The use of a non-reduced form instead of or in addition to a reduced one generally leads to the disappearance of the impersonal reading and the emergence of a straight forward anaphoric interpretation. Note the contrast in Polish between (2a), presented earlier, in which the 3pl is indicated solely by the inflection on the verb as opposed to (2b) in which an independent pronoun is used in addition to the verbal person marking.

- (2) b. W niedziele oni nie przynoszą poczty.  
 on Sunday they not bring:3PL mail  
 “They (anaphoric) do not bring the post on Sunday’s.”

In languages which lack passives, 3pl IMPs are widely used as translations of the passive of European languages, as in the following sentences from the translation of the Bible into the Eastern Grassfields Bantu language Limbum (3).

- (3) Limbum (Nforgwei 2004: 278)
- a. A fa rlii muu ene jisos  
 3PL give name child that Jesus  
 “He was named Jesus/They named him Jesus.”
- b. A lor Jisos a vu agho mbo  
 3PL take Jesus 3PL:INDEF come with there  
 “Jesus was led before them/ They led Jesus before them.”

Even in languages which do have passives, 3pl IMPs are often used as substitutes or alternatives to the passive, particularly in speech. Note the following from the first volume of Harry Potter (Rowling 1997:71).

- (4) "Well, there you are, boy. Platform nine -- platform ten. Your platform should be somewhere in the middle, but they don't seem to have built it yet, do they?"

In the light of the above, it is not surprising that 3pl IMPs are frequently cited as sources of actual passives. What is interesting though is that all the cases in point mentioned regularly in the typological and grammaticalization literature are confined to only two language groups: Nilotic (e.g. Greenberg 1959; Heine & Reh 1984:99; Heine & Claudi 1986:81; Heine & Kuteva 2002:236-7; Payne et al. 1994) and Bantu (e.g. Givón 1976:180; 1979:118, 21; 1990; Haspelmath 1990:49-50; Fleish 2005; Givón & Kawasha 2006; Kawasha 2007). In the relevant Nilotic languages the passive marker is seen to be diachronically but no longer synchronically related to the 3pl subject marker.<sup>4</sup> This is illustrated in (5) on the basis of Maa in which we see that the person prefix cross-referencing the 3pl subject *inkíshu* “cows” in (5a) is /ɛ/, while the passive suffix in (5b) is /i/.

- (5) Maa (Payne et al. 1994:301)

- a.      ɛ-tɔ-dʊa    in-kíshu              ɛn-k -ɛráy  
                  3-PFV-see    PL-cows:NOM      F:SG-child:ACC  
                  “The cows saw the child.”
- b.      e-y-tót-i              in-              kíshú

3-II-feed-PASS F:PL-cows:ACC

“The cows will be fed.”

In Bantu, on the other hand, the relevant passive markers are still synchronically the class markers for plural humans, as shown in (6) on the basis of Kimbundu.

(6) Kimbundu (Givón 1976:180)

a. a- mu- mono

3PL 3SG saw

“They saw him.”

b. Nzua a- mu- mono kwa meme

Nzua PASS- 3SG saw by me

“Nzua was seen by me.”

The cases of 3pl-to passive reanalysis in Nilotic and Bantu are intriguing for two reasons. The first relates to the fact that all the instances in question are of so-called impersonal or non-promotional passives, i.e. passives where the patient is not promoted to subject but continues to display object properties. This is reflected in (5b) by the accusative as opposed to nominative case marking of *inkíshú* “cows”. It is not so clear in (6b) due to the absence of case marking in Kimbundu. However, the person prefix *mu-* on the verb identifies the patient *Nzua* as an object. Moreover, Givón & Ranch (2006) are quite explicit in their treatment of the Kimbundu passive as non-promotional.<sup>5</sup> Given the non-promotional nature of these passives the question arises whether this is simply incidental or whether passives originating from 3pl IMPs, as opposed to those originating from other impersonal constructions, for

instance reflexive or participial ones, tend not to develop into promotional passives?<sup>6</sup> The second point of interest with respect to the passives originating from 3pl IMPs in Nilotic and Bantu concerns the apparent rarity of the phenomenon. My investigation of the literature has identified little more than a handful of potential cases of such reanalysis from outside Nilotic and Bantu. Yet the 3pl IMP construction is in itself highly frequent cross-linguistically. Examples of 3pl IMPs can be found in most branches of Indo-European, in Finno-Ugric, Altaic, Dravidian, Basque, in the Semitic and Cushitic branches of Afro-Asiatic, in the Sudanic, Surmic and Nilotic branches of Nilo-Saharan, in the Bantu and Atlantic branches of Niger-Congo, in various Oceanic languages, the languages of Australia and New Guinea and those of the Americas (see Siewierska 2008). Is thus the rarity of 3pl IMP-to-passive reanalysis just a knowledge gap or must there be factors conducive for a 3pl IMP to undergo such reanalysis which are not often encountered?

The present paper will explore in some detail both of the above points, the extent to which 3pl IMPs develop into canonical passive constructions and the reason why 3pl IMPs, as opposed to other impersonal constructions, appear to be such an uncommon source of passives. The discussion will be structured as follows. In section 2 I will consider the structural changes required in a 3pl IMP-to-passive reanalysis and the diachronic scenarios that have been posited to capture them. Then in section 3 I will confront the posited diachronic scenarios with the cross-linguistically attested cases of reanalysis concentrating on how closely the latter approximate the passive canon. I will be especially concerned with the relationship between the overt expression of the passive agent and the subjectivization of the patient and the structural properties which are most conducive to the formation of a fully fledged passive. Having established some of the structural prerequisites for the development of a promotional passive from a 3pl IMP, in section 4 I will take a closer look at the semantics of 3pl IMPs to see whether they too may display properties which make them more

or less likely candidates for a reanalysis as a passive. Section 5 will offer some concluding remarks.

## 2. Outlining the diachronic pathway

The degree of grammaticalization of a given construction can be appreciated on the basis of the distance that it has traversed from the postulated source construction and the distance that it yet has to breach if it were to evolve into a canonical instance of what may be interpreted to be the target construction. Therefore in order to be in a position to assess how far a construction has progressed along the 3pl-to-passive road we must review how 3pl IMPs differ from passives.

### 2.1 3pl IMPs vs. passives: the differences

Determining the differences between 3pl IMPs and passives is somewhat easier said than done since, on the one hand, we know relatively little about the typology of 3pl IMP constructions (but see e.g. Siewierska & Papastahthi 2008) and, on the other hand, the variation among passives makes it difficult to identify the properties of one subtype as representative of passives per se. We must therefore proceed with a somewhat simplified view of both constructions. I will take as my point of reference for the passive what many scholars consider to be a canonical passive, i.e. a promotional passive with an overt agent. I will assume that the canonical passive has the characteristics listed by Dixon & Aikhenvald (2000:4) in (7).

- (7)            i) applies to an underlying transitive & derives an intransitive;



- ii) underlying O becomes S;
- iii) underlying A goes into peripheral function being marked by a non-core case, adposition, etc, the argument can be omitted but there is always the option of including it;
- iv) there is some explicit formal marking generally by verbal affix or periphrastic verbal construction.

I will assume a canonical 3pl IMP to be a simple active clause with a third person plural subject corresponding to an unspecified human collective which has no antecedent in the preceding discourse.

The differences between 3pl IMPs and passives that have been observed in the literature pertain to several dimensions: semantics, pragmatics, morphosyntax, information structure, text-type, register and medium. Here, however, we will concentrate only on the differences in argument structure, the semantic role of the subject, the referential properties of the agent and the nature of the verb.

With respect to argument structure, both 3pl IMPs and passives are seen to have an effect on the same argument, namely the highest ranking argument on the semantic role hierarchy associated with a given predicate, which for ease of reference I will refer to as the agent.<sup>7</sup> In the case of 3pl IMPs, like in many other impersonal constructions, this agentive argument is seen to be suppressed in the sense of Blevins (2003) whereas in passives, it is seen to have been deleted (from the syntax though not from the semantics). That 3pl IMPs evince only argument suppression as opposed to reduction is reflected by the fact that they behave like clauses with a syntactic agentive subject. Thus, for example, we see in (8a) from Polish that the suppressed subject of a 3pl IMP can bind a pronominal element such as reflexive.

(8) Polish

- a. W Angli kochają zwierzęta bardziej niz swoje dzieci.  
 in England love:3PL animals:ACC more than their children  
 “In England they<sub>i</sub> love animals<sub>j</sub> more than their<sub>i j</sub> children.”
- b. \*W Angli zwierzęta są kochane bardziej niz swoje dzieci.  
 In England animals:NOM are loved:PASS.PART more than REFL children  
 “In England animals<sub>i</sub> are loved more than their<sub>i</sub> children.”

Note that unlike in the English translation of (8a), in Polish there is no ambiguity with respect to the antecedent of the reflexive *swoje*; it can only be coreferential with the 3pl. Significantly, as shown in (8b), the covert agent of a passive construction cannot bind a reflexive in Polish. Nor can it control explicit coreference in English.

In relation to the semantic role of the subject, as stated above, the subject of 3pl IMPs is the agent, while the subject of passives (if there is one) is precisely not the agent, which is demoted, but rather the second highest ranking semantic role associated with a given predicate. For convenience I will refer to the semantic role of the passive subject as the patient.

As for the referential properties of the agent in the two constructions, in 3pl IMPs the agent is an unspecified or only loosely specified human collective expressed by the 3pl subject form, free or bound. The agent of what may be considered to be a canonical passive, by contrast, is not restricted with respect to its referential or semantic properties; it may refer to a definite, specific or unspecified individual or group of individuals, it may be animate or inanimate, human or non human and, though less common, even correspond to the speech act participants. Further it may be covert or expressed overtly, typically as an adjunct.

Finally in regard to the nature of the verbs occurring in the two constructions, passives are considerably more restrictive than 3pl IMPs. Canonical passives are based on transitive verbs. If passives are also formed from intransitive verbs, typically only unergative as opposed to unaccusative verbs are involved. 3pl IMPs only rarely exhibit transitivity restrictions and at least some types can be used with any type of predicate, transitive, unergative, unaccusative and even copulative (see e.g. Blevins 2003).

Turning to the issue of degree of grammaticalization, in the earliest stages of what may ultimately be a 3pl-to-passive reanalysis we may expect a clear dominance of the characteristics of 3pl IMPs as opposed to those of the passive. Overt expression of the agent should be highly restricted, if permitted at all, and the patient should continue to exhibit clear object properties. At a somewhat more advanced stage of the reanalysis we may expect to find a greater tolerance of overt agents and/or the acquisition of some behavioural subject properties on the part of the patient. At this stage the construction in question may be considered to be an emergent passive. Once the patient has acquired the full range of relevant coding and behavioural subject properties and agent phrases with few or no referential or semantic restrictions have been permitted, the construction may be seen to have developed into an established passive. Yet further grammaticalization may be seen to have taken place if the class of predicates involved has been restricted to unergative (as opposed to unaccusative) and transitive ones (see especially Blevins 2003) and conversely the properties of potential passive agents have been further relaxed.

## 2.2 Givón's diachronic scenario

One possible scenario for the above reanalysis has been sketched by Givón (1976:180; 1979:188; 1990:606) who sees the passive emerging from a blend of the 3pl IMP construction with left-dislocation of the patient. This is shown in (9).

- (9) a. a- mono Nzua  
       3PL- saw Nzua  
       ‘‘They saw Nzua.’’
- b. Nzua, a- mu-mono  
       Nzua 3PL- 3SG saw  
       ‘‘Nzua, they saw him.’’
- c. Nzua a- mu-mono kwa mem  
       Nzua PASS- 3SG saw by me  
       ‘‘Nzua, was seen by me.’’

Givón argues that the emergence of a passive involves the following steps: a) a change of the 3pl marker into a passive marker; b) the gradual acquisition of subject properties by the patient-topic; c) the reanalysis of the object/topic agreement marker as a subject agreement marker and d) the addition of an agent phrase. Although this diachronic scenario is widely accepted and has been reiterated several times by Givón and taken over by numerous other scholars, it is by no means unproblematic. What is particularly unclear is which aspects of the scenario are essential and which are contingent to Bantu. Another important question concerns the sequence of the posited changes. Is there a fixed sequence of changes and if so what is it?

Let us consider the left-dislocation part of the scenario first. Left-dislocation involves the placement of the patient at the left periphery of the clause in initial topic position and resumption of the patient on the verb by means of an object prefix, *mu* in (9b). That a 3pl-to-passive reanalysis should feature some form of topicalization of the patient is to be expected as topicalization is a reflection of a change in information structure from that characteristic of 3pl IMPs to that of passives. The 3pl IMP is a construction which is essentially event centred as opposed to participant centred. The 3pl agent lacks prominence by virtue of its nonspecificity, while the patient lacks prominence by virtue of being an object, as opposed to a subject, and maintaining its object position. The construction thus tends to be used to focus on an event and not to introduce participants or further comment on them in any way. The passive and its corresponding active, by contrast, are participant centred; the active is agent-prominent, the passive patient-prominent.<sup>8</sup> The placement of the patient in topic position is thus a clear indication of a change from the event centred 3pl IMP towards the patient-centred passive. Nonetheless, topicality is not associated with initial position in all languages, most notably not in verb-first languages in which at least subject topics happily occur post-verbally. Significantly, the patient is not initial in the passive in the verb-first language Maa (5b) cited earlier nor in Nuer (10), which is split VSO/SVO.

(10) Nuer (Crazzolara 1933: 147-8)

cɔɔal-kɛ      γä      e    kwaa

call-PASS      I:ACC    by chief

‘‘I am called for by the chief.’’

In fact even in Bantu placement of the object in topic position is not a necessary feature of the 3pl-passive as evidenced by (11).

(11) Lunda (Kawasha 2007:45)

a-	a-	nat-a	nyi-kabu	kudi	a-tu-ans
SA-TNS-throw-FV		1-fruit		by	1-3-child-PL

“The fruits were thrown by the children.”

Consequently, it is difficult to view placement of the patient at the left-periphery of the clause as an essential part of the 3pl IMP to passive reanalysis. This also holds for the resumption of the topic by the person clitic on the verb. The presence of an object person clitic on the verb in Givón’s diachronic scenario is a consequence of the topicalization of the patient. In Bantu, object fronting is always accompanied by pronoun resumption. This, however, is not necessarily so in other languages. Thus the presence of the object person clitic and its posited reanalysis as a subject is also not an integral part of the 3pl-to-passive reanalysis.

What of the agent phrase? Need there be one? Most scholars working on passive constructions consider an overt agent to be an integral part of the passive, as reflected in the characteristics of the canonical passive listed earlier in (7).<sup>9</sup> And indeed since no simple predicate may occur with two agents, other than coordinated ones, the presence of an overt agent in a would-be 3pl IMP construction provides clear evidence that the 3pl marker has been or is in the process of being reanalysed as a passive marker. In the absence of an agent, on the other hand, a Verb-<sub>3pl</sub> NP construction such as (9a) is potentially three-ways ambiguous between: (i) an active transitive construction with an anaphoric third plural subject, (ii) a 3pl IMP construction and (iii) a non-promotional (impersonal) passive. If the patient is already topicalized, as in (9b), this three-way ambiguity is reduced to two-way ambiguity; the 3pl IMP reading is likely to disappear leaving the anaphoric and non-promotional passive readings. At this stage, the appearance of the possibility of agent

expression would again fully disambiguate the construction. Further it might be argued that the presence of an overt agent is also likely to speed up the acquisition of more subject properties on the part of the patient, i.e. the development of the non-promotion passive into a promotional one.

I have just suggested that in the 3pl IMP-to-passive reanalysis the emergence of an agent phrase is likely to precede the full subjectivization of the patient. This is also what is implicit in Givón's diachronic scenario or rather in the Kimbundu example that he gives, namely (9c). Although the patient is here in initial position, since (9c) is a non-promotional passive we may assume that the patient continues to exhibit the syntactic behaviour of objects rather than subjects. Moreover, there is no indication that the *mu*-prefix has been reinterpreted as a subject prefix. The agent, by contrast, is a first person one. The presence of a first person agent is very telling. It is a reflection of the enormous distance that (9c) is likely to have travelled from its source construction, the 3pl IMP. Recall that the agents of 3pl IMPs are non-singular and unspecified. The agent in (9c) is not only singular and specific but a first person. Thus we may conclude that either agent phrases develop more quickly than subjects in passives derived from 3pl impersonals or that the Kimbundu example, which has epitomized the posited reanalysis for the last twenty-odd years, is very atypical.

Having considered the differences between 3pl IMPs and passives and the potential diachronic pathway that the former need to take in developing into the latter, let us now confront our theoretical speculations with the actual instances of this change that have been identified in the literature.

### 3. Degree of grammaticalization: a cross-linguistic view

As mentioned earlier, my scrutiny of the literature for potential instances of passives originating from 3pl IMP constructions has identified very few cases in point. The most promising are in the languages listed in (12), which also includes some of the previously mentioned Bantu and Nilotic languages.

- (12) Coptic (Layton 2004:135-7, Reintges 2004, 2008a,b)  
 Itelmen (Georg & Volodin 1999:164) a Chukato-Kamchatkan language  
 Vitu (van der Berg 2006) a Western Oceanic language of Papua New Guinea  
 Creek (Martin 2000) and Seminole (Nathan 1977:124), Koasati (Kimball 1991:138),  
 three Muskogean languages<sup>10</sup>  
 Lakota (Pustet & Rood 2008) and Omaha (Eschenberg 2005), two Siouian languages  
 Caviñea (Guillaume 2004: 258; 269), a Tacanan language of Bolivia  
 Kaqchiquel (Broadwell & Duncan 2002), a Mayan language  
 Bantu: Kimbundu, Luvale, Lunda, (Horton 1949:88; Givón & Kawasha 2006;  
 Kawasha 2007)  
 Nilotic<sup>11</sup>: Maa (Payne et al. 1994; Heine and Reh 1984: 99; Heine and Claudi 1986:  
 80), Dholuo (Tucker 1993:436), Nuer (Crazzolara 1933: 147-8)

In virtually all of the above languages the 3pl origins of the respective passive markers is explicitly mentioned or even discussed by the cited authors. I will refer to the languages in (12) as ‘the sample’. In what follows I will consider the relevant passive constructions in these languages focusing on how they fare with respect to Givón’s diachronic scenario and especially on how advanced they are on the road to becoming fully established passives.

### 3.1 Nature of the verb



Let me begin with the least complicated issue, the nature of the verbs which may occur in the relevant constructions. In the Nilotic languages there appear to be no restrictions on the nature of the verbs used; transitive, intransitive, both unergative and unaccusative, stative, and basic and derived verbs all occur. By way of illustration consider the examples in (13) from Maa.

(13) Maa (Payne 2008)

- a. e-ibel-it'o-i  
3-rock-PROG-IMPV  
'It is being rocked from side to side.'
- b. e-dɔ-i  
3-be red-IMPV  
'(People) are red./ Being red happens.'
- c. e-ta-wuas-aték-i  
3-PFV-pride-PFV.PL-MID-IMPV  
'People were/became proud.'

By contrast, in Lunda, Kaqichel and Vitu only transitive verbs appear in the 3pl-passive. Whether this is also the case in Coptic, Itelemen, Luval and Kimbundu I have not been able to establish. The only examples given by the respective authors involve transitive verbs. In Creek, Martin (2000:388) suggests that agentive predicates are clearly favoured though the issue requires further investigation. Kimball (1991:138) is quite explicit about the construction being used only with transitive verbs in Koasati. In Lakhota (Pustet & Rood

2008:729) there appears to be a restriction to semantically highly transitive verbs. And in Cavineña all the verbs found in the *ta/taana*-construction are transitive with the exception of the verb *maju* “die” (Guillaume 2008). Thus with respect to the semantics of the verbs found in the 3pl IMP/passive construction, for most of the languages in question a passive analysis seems viable.

### 3.2 Agent expression

Turning to the agent phrase, among the languages in the sample there is a good degree of variation with respect to agent expression. No agent is permitted in Vitu, Creek, Koasati Seminole, and Cavineña. In Maa, Dholuo and Lakhota the possibility of agent expression seems to be dependent on the age of the speakers. Agent phrases occur occasionally in the speech of the younger generation, as illustrated in (14) from Lakhota, which is attributed by the respective authors to the influence of Swahili and English in the case of Maa and Dholuo and English in the case of Lakhota.

(14) Lakhota (Pustet & Rood 2008:738)

Igmútha        hé        súka    theb-Ø-yá-pi.  
 mountain lion   that:SG   dog       STEM-3SGP-eat up-PASS  
 “That mountain lion was eaten by a dog/the dog.”

Both singular and plural nominal though not pronominal agents are regularly found in Itelmen (see 19b further below), Coptic, Lunda (10) and Luvale. In Coptic in fact even a non-human, but animate agent is possible, as illustrated in (15).

(15) Coptic (Reintges 2004:227)

kan	eʃtʃe	ənt-a=u:-tarpə=s	hi-tən-ne-thɛrion
or	if	REL-PFV=3PL-carry.away-3FSG	by-hand-DEF.PL-animal

“or whether she had been carried away by wild animals (...)”

In addition to nominal agents pronominal third person ones are attested in Nuer (16).

(16) Nuer (Crazzolara 1933:135)

càa <sup>12</sup>	jooc	è	kɛn
PAST:PASS	3SG:put to flight	by	them

“He was put to flight by them.”

And finally all types of agents, even 1st and 2nd person ones can be overtly expressed in Kimbundu (8c) and the *ki*-passive in Kaqchikel (17).<sup>13</sup>

(17) Kaqchiuel (Boadwell & Duncan 2002:4)

Rin x-	in-ki-tz’et	aw-oma’	rat
I	COM-1ABS-PASS-see	2SE-by	you

“I was seen by you.”

### 3.3 The encoding of the patient

With respect to the subjectivization of the patient, the evidence from morpho-syntactic encoding, i.e. word order, case and agreement, is with one partial exception, either negative or inconclusive. The patient in the relevant constructions manifests clear object encoding in Maa, Nuer, Creek, Seminole, Dholuo, Itelmen and Coptic. In the first four languages the case marking of the patient is unequivocally accusative or oblique and the word order is inconclusive, the languages being either verb-initial or final. In addition in Maa and Nuer the patient, unlike a subject, exhibits no verbal person marking. In Creek and Seminole the person marking is inconclusive with respect to grammatical relations as the markers for the third person are zero while the first and second person forms exhibit active alignment and thus the same forms are used for a patient S as for the O. The oblique marking of a NP patient in the *ho*-passive is illustrated in (18) from Creek and the object-like marking of a second person patient S (19a) and of a patient in the *ho*-passive is shown in (19b) from Seminole.

(18) Creek (Martin 2000:388)

oymo	lki-n	yaha-n	akal-ho.y-in
boiling	water-OBL	wolf-OBL	pour on-IMP:PL-LGR-DS

“They pour boiling water on Wolf.”

(19) Seminole (Nathan 1977:124)

a. ci-piŋkã:l-aŋk-ã:  
 2SG-frightened-PAST-INTER  
 “Were you frightened?”

b. ci-hi:stõ-ho:y-imác  
 2SG-see-PASS-past:DEC

“You were seen long ago.”

Itelmen and Dholuo have no case marking of core arguments but the verbal person marking of the patient identifies it as an object.<sup>14</sup> Compare, for example, the Itelmen (20a) and (20b).

(20) Itelmen (Georg & Volodin 1999:164)

a. Sillatumxe-ʔn kəmma n-an'çp-miŋ

brother-PL 1SG 3PL-teach-1SG

“The brothers taught me.”

b. Kəmma n-an'çp-miŋ sillatumx-enk/sillatumxe-ʔ-nk

1SG 3PL-teach-1SG brother-LOC brother-PL-LOC

“I was taught by the brother/brothers.”

In Dholuo the word order is quite flexible and the patient in the 3pl IMP/passive construction may be preverbal or postverbal. Order is thus not a good indicator of grammatical relations.

In Itelmen though the patient is clause initial, since the language is essentially SOV, the patient would normally be preverbal irrespective of its S or O status. The word order is thus also inconclusive as far as the grammatical relation status of the patient is concerned. In Coptic, by contrast, which is SVO and in which verbal person marking of the object is in complementary distribution with a co-occurring corresponding free form the word order and case marking or the agreement marking identify the patient as an object. The object agreement marking of the patient by means of the third person singular feminine enclitic can be seen in (15) cited earlier. The non-nominative case marking which is by means of a

preposition and the postverbal placement of the pronominal patient in the 3pl IMP is illustrated in (21), which is in fact the clause preceding (15) in the given text.

(21) Coptic (Reintges 2002:227)

kan	eʃtʃe	ənt-a=u:-aikhmalɔtize	əmmo-s	hi-tən-nə-βarbaros
or	if	REL-PFV=3PL-enslave	PREP-3FSG	by-hand-DEF.PL-barbarian

“or whether she had been enslaved by the barbarians (...)”

Split encoding of the patient, i.e. with some object-like and some subject-like characteristics is found in Luvale, Lunda, Kimbundu and Vitu. In Kimbundu the initial placement of the patient may be seen as a reflection of subject encoding while the verbal person marking is that of an object. In Luvale and Lunda this is also so but for the fact that the patient may be postverbal. In Lunda, though not Luvale, such postverbal patients, if inanimate, do not trigger object marking on the verb. In Vitu which is also an SVO language like Luvale, Lunda and Kimbundu, the patient in a passive clause though typically preverbal, as in (22), like in Luvale and Lunda may occur postverbally.<sup>15</sup>

(22) Vitu (van den Berg 2006: 9)

Goloa	kua	e	koha-nga	na	desk
thing	this	REALIS:3	call-PASS	ART	desk

“This thing is called a desk.”

Unlike in the other three languages, when preverbal, the patient determines the agreement on the verbal auxiliary, when postverbal the agreement is necessarily third person singular.<sup>16</sup>

The preverbal placement and ability to determine agreement marking is in line with subject

status, the postverbal placement and default third person singular agreement is in line with object status. In the case of nominal singular patients such as *goloa kua* in (22) only the word order is suggestive of the grammatical relation of the patient since the agreement is the same irrespective of whether the patient is preverbal or postverbal. In Lakhotá, Omaha, Cavineña and Kaqchikel the encoding of the patient does not provide any evidence of its grammatical status. In Lakhotá and Omaha there is no overt case marking and the verbal person forms which are overt only for the first and second person exhibit split active alignment, as in Creek and Seminole. In the so called *pi*-passive for those speakers who allow for the overt expression of the agent, the patient necessarily precedes the agent, as shown in (13) given earlier. Since the transitive order with nominal participants is typically SOV, the location of the patient before that of the agent may be seen as indicative of subject encoding. However, as agents are permitted only by younger speakers and are in any case rare, the location of a patient nominal is typically not really suggestive of its grammatical relation. When the patient is a speech act participant, which is acceptable only for some speakers, the verbal person forms used in the *pi*-passive are those of the undergoer. This is illustrated in (23).

(23) Lakhotá (Pustet & Rood 2008:716)

Héchel apétu kil é él wó'oyaka wazí oyág-ma-si-pi.

so day the this on story a tell-1SGO-ask-PASS

“Today I was asked to tell a story.”

The undergoer encoding of the patient is also unrevealing with respect to its S vs. O status since due to the split-active alignment, the patient would receive undergoer marking irrespective of whether it is an S or an O. The encoding of the patient in the *ta/tana*-passive in Cavineña, illustrated in (24), is equally uninformative.

(24) Cavineña (Guillaume 2004: 258)

Kashi-Ø	ara-tana-ya.
sweet.banana:ABS	eat-PASS:IMPFV

“Sweet bananas are eaten.”

The language has ergative case marking, also ergatively aligned bound person markers on the verb in complementary distribution with free forms for the S and O and rather flexible word order. The patient can occur both preverbally as in (24) and postverbally as in (25) and thus its placement provides no evidence of its grammatical relation.

(25) Cavineña (Guillaume 2004: 264)

A-tana-wa=	e kwe	e-kwer	[e-buji=ekatsje]s
affect-PASS-PFV	1SG:DAT	1SG-GEN	1-nephew-DUAL

“My two nephews got killed!”

Nor is the grammatical relation of the patient deducible from the case marking or the presence of a bound person form on the verb as the patient is in the absolutive and if pronominal will be bound to the verb irrespective of whether it is an O or an S. Kaqchikel, like Cavineña, exhibits morphological ergative alignment though only in verbal agreement not in case marking which is absent. Accordingly, the fact that the verb in the *ki*-passive exhibits evident absolutive agreement with the patient, indicated by the *-in-* prefix in (17) earlier above, tells us nothing about whether the patient is an O or S. The word order in the language is flexible and thus also provides no clues as to grammatical relations. Nonetheless, it is worth pointing out that in all the examples provided by Broadwell & Duncan (2002) the



patient in the *ki*-passive is clause initial. Finally in Koasati, unlike in Creek and Seminole, the patient occurs with nominative rather than with oblique marking, as shown in (26).

(26) Koasati (Kimball 1991:138)

- a.      *thátka-k*                      *ho-banna-tikko-laho-y*  
             white person-NOM      PASS-need-3NEG(3Ci)-IRREALIS-TERMINAL MARKER  
             “White people will not be needed.”
- b.      *ittili-ho-cobak-k*              *ho-ci-mánka-Vhco-k ká,h,ha-n*  
             eye-DISTR-big-NOM      PASS-2SG-call-HABIT-SS say:H.GRADE-DS  
             “You are called Big Eyes.”

The agreement marking is split active, as in Creek, Semiole, Lakhota and Omaha with typically zero marking for third person and active for first and second. However in the case of verbs belonging to the 3Ci conjugation such as *banna* “need” in (26a) there is overt agreement marking of subjects in the third person in negative clauses. Thus in (26a) not only the case marking but also the agreement marking identifies *thátkak* as the S as opposed to the O. The agreement marking of first and second person patients, however, is inconclusive since the undergoer prefixes are used as shown in (26b), just as in Creek and Seminole.

The possibilities discussed above of type of verb, agent expression and the extent to which the patient exhibits subject encoding are summarised in Table 1. The label ‘inconclusive’ abbreviated to ‘incl’ is used when the location or marking of the patient could be viewed as either S or O marking. The +/-, on the other hand, indicates variant encoding

one of which is associated with S marking and one with O marking. ? stands for lack of information.

Table 1

Verb type, agent expression and subject encoding characteristic of the patient in the 3pl passives in the languages in the sample

	Verb	Ag 3 Human	Ag Non- Human	Ag 12	Subj order	Subj agr	Subj case
Maa	all	(+)	-	-	incl	-	-
Dholuo	all	(+)	-	-	incl	-	-
Nuer	all	+	-	-	incl	-	-
Coptic	Tr?	+	+	-	-	-	-
Kimbundu	Tr?	+	?	+	+	-	irr
Lunda	Tr	+	+	-	+/-	-	irr
Luvale	Tr?	+	?	-	+/-	-	irr
Creek	Ag	-	-	-	incl	incl	-
Koasati	Tr	-	-	-	incl	incl/+	+
Lakhota	Ag	(+)	(+)	-	incl	incl	irr
Caviñea	Tr 1intr	-	-	-	incl	incl	incl
Kaqchikel	Tr	+	+	+	incl	incl	irr
Itelmen	Tr	+	-	-	incl	-	irr
Vitu	Tr	-	-	-	+/-	+/-	irr

We see in Table 1 that in the languages in the sample the most common change in encoding that the patient undergoes relative to its object characteristics in the projected 3pl IMP source construction is with respect to order. This is fully in line with the topicalization aspect of Givón's diachronic scenario. In four of the SVO languages the patient in the passive construction is either necessarily initial (Kimbundu) or tends to be initial (Luvale, Lunda and Vitu). There are two languages in which there is a partial change in the agreement marking of the patient, Vitu and Koasati. And there is one language in which the patient manifests a change in overt case marking, Koasati. These differences suggests that of the three subject encoding properties, word order is acquired prior to agreement and case marking. However, we have no clear evidence for the relative order of acquisition of case and agreement marking. It has been repeatedly noted in the literature (see e.g. Cole et al. 1978; Malchukov 2005, 2007) that case marking is an encoding property which tends to lag behind that of both agreement and word order. Our findings with respect to the encoding properties of patients in these 3pl-based passives do not, however, confirm this. In the languages which display both case marking and agreement marking, either there is no change in marking or in one, Koasati, subject case marking is acquired in full while subject agreement marking only in part, i.e. for third person subjects. The data are, however, too sparse to allow us to draw any generalizations.

What Table 1 also reveals is that the possibility of overt agent expression tends to emerge earlier than morphological subject encoding of the patient. This again conforms to the expectations of Givón's diachronic scenario. All the languages but for the Muskogean, Caviñea and Vitu display some possibility of agent expression. By contrast, in only two languages in the sample, Koasati and Vitu, does the patient acquire morphological coding properties which would allow one to unequivocally identify it (under some circumstances) as a subject.

### 3.4. The behavioural properties of the patient

As reflected in Table 1, in terms of coding properties only in five of the languages in the sample do the patients in the relevant passives qualify as subjects. Coding properties, however, are not the only diagnostics of the nature of grammatical relations. In fact most scholars consider syntactic behaviour as more revealing of grammatical relations than coding properties. The consensus seems to be that on the whole coding properties tend to lag behind syntactic ones (see e.g. Keenan 1976; Givón 1979: 235-268; Cole et al. 1980; Malchukov 2005). If this is so the possibility arises that even in some of the languages in which the patient does not display unequivocal subject encoding properties or even manifests accusative case and/or agreement it has already acquired some subject behavioural properties.

Unfortunately, I have not been able to determine to what extent this is indeed so since for most of the languages in the sample there is no data on the syntactic behaviour of the patients in the relevant constructions. The only syntactic information that I have relates to Maa, Lunda, Cavineña and Kakchiquel.

The *i*-passive in Maa is a poor candidate for a promotional passive since not only is the patient clearly marked like an object but also the construction displays no restrictions with respect to verb type. And indeed according to Payne (2008) the patient exhibits no syntactic subject properties but rather behaves like an object. One example of this is with respect to the control of number agreement on the infinitive. In Maa an infinitive agrees in number with the subject of a preceding fully inflected verb. We see in the non-impersonal (27a), for example, that the infinitive of “try” takes the plural *áa*- prefix in agreement with the first person plural subject of the preceding progressive. In the impersonal (27b) we find the same plural prefix

on the infinitive which reveals that the agreement is with the unspecified 3pl and not the singular patient “house”.

(27) Maa

- a.       $\xi k\acute{i}$ -gurá      áa-jo      má-ta-yioló      i-rórei      loo  
          1PL-PROG      INF:PL-try      SUBJN-SUBJ-know      PL-words:ACC M:PL:ACC  
          1-Máásâi  
          m-Massai:pl:acc  
          “We are trying to learn about Massai word.”

- b.       $\xi$ -girá-i      áa-un      enk-aji  
          3-PROG-PASS      INF:PL-erect      F:SG-house:ACC  
          “The house is being erected.”

Lunda, on the other hand, is more promising. In this language, according to Givón & Kawasha (2006) and Kawasha (2007), the patient displays two behavioural subject characteristics, but also other clearly behavioural object properties. The first of the two subject characteristics is the ability to function as the controlee of co-reference in certain purpose clauses illustrated in (28).

(28) (Givón & Kawasha 2006:28)

- a.      Mari w-a-lond-eli      kw-mw-iinka mukaanda  
          M      3SG-PAST-come-ASP      INF-3SGO-give book  
          “Mary came to give him/her a book.”

- b.      w-a-lond-eli              kw-mw-iinka    mukaanda kudi Mary  
             3SG-PAST-come-ASP    INF-3SGO-give    book              by Mary  
             “She came in order to be given a book by Mary.”

Observe that the recipient of the passive purpose infinitival clause in (28b), just like the subject agent of the active one in (28a) can be unexpressed under coreference with the subject of the matrix clause.<sup>17</sup> The second subject property is the impossibility of the patient in the 3pl-passive to function as a reflexive (29a) which distinguishes it from a patient of a transitive clause (29b) and unites it with the subject of a promotional passive in a language such as English, as reflected in the translation of (29a).

- (29) a.      \*mwaana a-a-di-mona kudi yeena  
             child              3PL-PAST-REFL-see DAT-3SG  
             \*”The child was seen by himself/herself.”
- b.      w-a-di-mona  
             3SG-saw-REFL-see  
             “She saw him/herself.”

The object property, on the other hand, is behaviour under relativization. While subject relativization involves the placement of a relative clause marker immediately after the subject (30a), when the object is relativised a relative prefix agreeing in number and noun class with the head noun is placed in the first prefix position, the subject person marker is suffixed

rather than prefixed to the verb and the subject is located postverbally rather than preverbally (30b).

- (30) a. Mwaana      ona      w-a-mona      chisalu  
          child           REL      3SG-PAST-see      mat  
          “The child who saw the mat.”

- b. Chisalu ch-a-mona-yi              mwaana  
     mat      3sg-past-see-3sg              child  
     “the mat that the child saw.”

When the patient of a 3pl-passive is relativized, the verb in the relative clause is marked by a prefix agreeing in number and class with the patient NP, and the 3pl person marker takes the suffixal position, just like in object relativization. Compare (30b) with (30c).

- c. chisalu ch-aa-mona-wu              kudi Mary  
     mat      3SG-PAST-see-3PL              by      Mary  
     “the mat that was seen by Mary.”

Turning to Cavineña, according to Guillaume (p.c.) the syntactic evidence with respect to the status of the patient in the *ta/tana*-passive is inconclusive. While there is some evidence that it behaves as a subject with respect to coreference between a matrix clause and one type of dependent clause, this does not hold in all cases. Further investigation is in order to determine the exact conditions under which the subject-like behaviour obtains and when it does not. Finally in Kakchiquel the patient behaves like a subject with respect to subject oriented

relational NPs such as *rik'i rurayb'äl* “because of his/her desire”. As demonstrated in (31) in the case of both a normal transitive clause (31a) and the standard passive (31b), *rik'i rurayb'äl* modifies the subject.

(31) Kakchiquel (Broadwell & Duncan 2002)

- a. A Juan x-u-tz'ub'-aj xta Maria r-ik'i  
 CL Juan com-3SG:ERG-kiss-TR CL Maria 3SG-because.of  
 ru-rayb'äl  
 3SG-desire  
 “Juan kissed Maria voluntarily.” (= Juan’s choice)
- b. Xta Maria x-tz'ub'-äx r-oma' a Juan r-ik'i ru-rayb'äl  
 CL Maria COM-kiss-PASS 3-by CL Juan 3-because.of 3-desire  
 “Maria was kissed by Juan voluntarily.” (= Maria’s choice.)

In the *ki*-passive (31c) *rik'i rurayb'äl* modifies the patient just as in the standard passive.

- c. Xta Maria x-ki-tz'ub'-aj r-oma' a Juan r-ik'i ru-rayb'äl.  
 CL Maria COM-PASS-kiss-TR 3-by CL Juan 3-because.of 3-desire  
 “Maria was kissed by Juan voluntarily.” (= Maria’s choice.)

Another piece of syntactic evidence for the subject status of the patient in the *ki*-passive comes from the use of the complementizer *chi* “that”. This complementizer can be omitted only if the subject of the embedded clause is the same as that of the matrix clause, as is the case in (32a) and also (32b) in which the embedded clause is a standard passive.



- (32) a. A Juan n-r-ajo' (chi) n-u-loq saqmolo  
 CL Juan INC-3-want (COMP)INC-3-buy eggs  
 "Juan wants to buy eggs."
- b. A Juan x-u-b'ij ch-w-e (chi) x-b'a-x tz'i  
 CL Juan COM-3-tell PREP-3-to (COMP) COM-bite PASS  
 'r-oma' ritz'i  
 3sg-by the dog  
 "Juan<sub>i</sub> told me that he<sub>i\*j</sub> was bitten by the dog."

We see in (32c) that with respect to complementizer deletion the patient of the *ki*-passive qualifies as a subject.

- c. A Juan x-u-b'ij ch-w-e (chi) x-ki-b'a' r-oma'  
 CL Juan COM-3-tell PREP-3-to (COMP) COM-PASS-bite 3-by  
 ri tz'i'  
 the dog  
 "Juan<sub>i</sub> told me that he<sub>i</sub> was bitten by the dog."

In sum, the patient in Kaqichel passives is a bone fide subject not only in terms of its encoding properties but also its syntactic behaviour, the Cavineña patient has not yet acquired the full set of behavioural subject properties, the Lunda patient while displaying some subject encoding and behavioural properties still has morphological and behavioural object

characteristics and the Maa patient is clearly an object in all respects. Thus, we have one language Kaqichel, in which a 3pl IMP appears to have developed into a fully promotional passive and potentially two, Cavineña and Lunda, in which a non-promotional passive is well on the way to becoming a promotional one. If morphological properties do indeed lag behind the syntactic, one may well expect a patient which has actually acquired a morphological property of subject to also display some behavioural subject characteristics. We can therefore add Koasati to our set of languages with a promotional passive also in terms of syntactic behaviour. Another good candidate for being on the way to a promotional passive, is the one in Vitu. Recall that the patient in Vitu when preverbal determines verbal agreement. However, Van den Berg admits that he has not yet had the possibility of investigating whether the patient does indeed exhibit any syntactic subject properties.

### 3.5 Factors conducive to the 3pl-to-passive reanalysis

Our investigation of the degree of grammaticalization of passives originating from 3pl IMPs has revealed that such passives may evolve into fully promotional ones. They may even evolve into what is typically considered to be a canonical passive, i.e. a promotional passive with an expressed agent. Only one of the constructions in the sample has achieved the status of a canonical passive, namely the Kaqichel *ki*-passive. The corresponding construction in Koasati is promotional but agentless, that in Cavineña is not fully promotional and agentless, the one in Lunda is not yet fully promotional and the construction in Vitu is both necessarily agentless and not fully promotional. The canonical aspects of the Kaqichel *ki*-passive notwithstanding, it continues to bear traces of its 3pl origin, namely: the agent must be animate and the subject cannot be generic or third person plural. The standard passive in

Kaqichel has none of these restrictions. The animacy constraint on the agent of the *ki*-passive may be viewed as the last vestige of the humanness constraint of the unspecified subject of 3pl IMPs. The constraint against generic subjects may be seen to follow from the lack of topic-worthiness of a generic patient and thus the unlikelihood of such patients feeding into a patient-prominent construction such as the passive. And the constraint against third plural subjects is attributable to the still existing homophony between the passive *ki* and the 3pl ergative verbal person marker.

Given that only one of the 3pl IMP-based passives that have been attested in the literature has developed into a canonical passive, we may well ask what factors are conducive to this rare development.

In relation to the subjectivization of the patient a facilitating factor is clearly the lack of a morphological distinction between the O and S, i.e. no case marking or non-accusative case marking and non-accusative agreement marking.<sup>18</sup> Needless to say in the absence of any morphological marking distinguishing the O from the S, it is much easier to interpret a patient as a subject than if the patient bears marking associated with object status. This is especially so if the patient is located in a designated and clearly identifiable subject position, such as the preverbal in a SVO language or post-verbal in an OVS one or alternatively if there are no designated positions in a language for either the subject or the object. Kaqichel has no case marking, and it has ergative agreement marking and flexible order. It thus fully complies with all three of the above conditions. So does Cavineña with its ergative case and ergative bound pronouns and flexible order and also in part Lakhota which has no case marking and active agreement with zero forms for the third person. The glaring exception to the above is Koasati, which has overt case marking which distinguishes the S (and A) marked by *-k* from the O marked by *-n*. However, the fact that Koasati is the only language in the sample and the only one of the three Muskogean languages considered here in which the patient has acquired

subject case marking may also be seen as confirming the confounding role of case marking in the subjectivization process. Further none of the other languages in the sample in which the 3pl-passive is well on the way to becoming a canonical one, i.e. the Bantu languages Lunda, Luvale nor Kinyarawanda have overt case marking. All do, however, have overt object agreement marking of the patient as does also Itelmen. While object agreement on the part of the patient does not appear to preclude the patient from acquiring some behavioural subject properties, it is an obstacle with respect to the acquisition of full subject encoding properties since the object agreement markers must either be reanalysed as subject agreement ones or be dropped and replaced by subject agreement markers. The first possibility leads to the development of a new subject agreement marker paradigm specific to passive subjects and homophonous with that of the object. Interestingly, there do not appear to be any actual instances of this having taken place. I am not aware of any language in which the subject agreement markers used in the passive but not those used in other intransitive clauses correspond to those of the object agreement ones. The second possibility seems more likely particularly if the object person markers are not obligatory in the language. It might have occurred in Vitu, for example. It is not clear whether Vitu had object clitics or suffixes at the time when the allomorph of the passive suffix, *-(a)nga* was attached to the verb. It currently has object suffixes, but these do not occur with non-singular pronouns and in some other circumstances. If it did, the object clitics were dropped either before or after *-(a)nga* was reanalysed as a passive marker. Significantly, as exemplified earlier in (21), subject agreement markers are attached not to the verbal stem to which *-(a)nga* is attached but are fused with aspect, mood and sequentiality markers in a preceding auxiliary. That overt accusative marking of the patient constitutes an impediment not only to the patient acquiring the encoding properties of subjects but even behavioural subject properties is suggested by Maa. While Maa need not be representative of the status of patients in all the other languages

with accusatively marked patients it is of interest to observe that in all of the languages in question, namely Coptic, Dholuo, Maa, Creek and Seminole even the location of the patient is either different from that of the subject (Coptic) or not unambiguously identifiable as that of the subject. In sum, the data stemming from our investigation suggests that the type of morphological marking in a language conducive to the subjectivization of the patient can be captured in the hierarchy in (33).

- (33) no case or non-accusative > no case & accusative > accusative case &  
case and/or agreement agreement any type of agreement

As for the development of an agent phrase, recall that the presence of an overt agent is an unequivocal indication of the reanalysis of the 3pl IMP as passive. Accordingly the possibility of agent expression may be seen as facilitating the further grammaticalization of a construction into a fully fledged passive. However, unlike in the case of the subject, there are no morphosyntactic properties of the relevant constructions which may be taken as conducive to the emergence of an overt agent.<sup>19</sup> The factors which appear to be relevant lie outside the actual constructions in question. These factors are the existence of other passive constructions with overt agents in the language and/or contact with languages which have salient agentive passives. Kaqichel, as illustrated in (31b) and (32b), has another passive, in fact, two other passives, in addition to the *ki*-passive which permit overt agents. Lunda, and presumably also the other two Bantu languages mentioned here, still has the pan-Bantu passive formed with the affix *-(ib)w/- (ig)w* which, as shown in (34), allows for overt agent expression.

- (34) Lunda (Kawasha 2007:38)

anvwáli	a-di-in-i	a-swezha	ku-lem-ish-ew-a
CL2-parent	SUBJ-TNS-be-R.PAST-FV	SUBJ-exceed	INF-be-important-PASS-FV
kúdi	a-ntúni	na-áwu	
by	CL2-neighbor	with-PRO2	

“The parents were highly respected by their neighbors.”

The ancestor of Coptic, Ancient Egyptian, had as many as three passive constructions, which Reintges (2008a) refers to as the internal, suffixal and reduplicative passives, respectively. All three allow for the expression of an agent, as illustrated in (35).

(35) Ancient Egyptian (Reintges 2008a:36, 16)

a.      wbʔ-(w)      ꜥ      mnꜥ      jn      Mrjj-n(j)-Rꜥ      pn  
          open.PFV-PASS lake      nurse                      FOC      Meri-ri-Re DEM.N:SG  
          “The canal of the nurse was opened by king Meri-nj-Re here.”

b.      ꜥꜣp-t(j)      ꜥ =f      jn      ntrꜥ      ꜥ ꜥ  
          take.PFV-PASS arm=POSS:3M:SG FOC              God great  
          “May his arm be taken by the great God.”

c.      ꜥꜣpp      ꜥ=f      jn      Rꜥ  
          take:PASS      arm=POSS.3SGM      FOC      Re  
          “His arm will be taken by (the sun god) Re.”

Moreover, Coptic itself has a periphrastic passive construction involving the auxiliary verb *tʃi* “to take” which may occur with an agent phrase, as is the case in (36).

(36) Coptic (Reintges 2004:228)

a=i-tʃi-sβɔ	ən-- nə-kɔt	əm-pə-nute
PFV=1SG-take-teaching	PREP-DEF.PL-precept	link-DEF.MSG-god

eβol	hi-toot=u	ən-hen-nok <sup>y</sup>	ən-telios
PCL	through-hand=POSS.3PL	as-INDEF.PL-great	link-PERFECT

“I was taught (lit. I received teaching) in the precepts of God by great perfect ones.”

According to the sources consulted, there are no alternative agentive passives in the other languages in the sample. In the case of Itelmen, the presence of the agent phrase could be attributed to the influence of Russian as the language, like all Chukotko-Kamchatkan languages, has been under heavy influence of Russian, which not only has a reflexive and periphrastic passive which permit agents but also employs 3pl IMPs on a regular basis (Ard 1978:223).<sup>20</sup> As mentioned earlier the influence of Swahili and nowadays also English, is seen to underlie the development of an agent phrase in Nilotic. And the emergence of an agent phrase among the younger generation of Lakhota speakers is attributed by Pustet & Rood (2008) to English. Why the same hasn’t happened in the Muskogean languages, the remaining speakers of which are also bilingual in English is impossible to say. The speakers of Vitu know English as well but according to van den Berg (2006:3), the language is used mainly in the community school and only rarely in everyday situations, the lingua franca

being Tok Pisin. As for the speakers of Cavineña, some clearly do know Spanish, but bilingualism does not appear to be widespread.

In this section I have suggested some local, morphosyntactic features and some more general ones which may speed up the reanalysis of a 3pl IMP construction into a promotional passive and even a canonical passive. But we have yet to address the issue of what underlies the reanalysis in the first place and, crucially, why it is far less common than the cross-linguistic distribution of 3pl IMP constructions would lead one to expect.

#### 4. Types of 3pl impersonals

An issue which has been entirely ignored in the previous discussions of the 3pl-to-passive reanalysis is the type of 3pl IMP constructions that might serve as an input to the reanalysis. 3pl IMPs are by no means all alike. They have been classified in terms of whether i) the construction provides any means of identification of the referent of the subject, ii) what sort of referent identification is provided, iii) the nature of the referents involved and iv) the generic vs. episodic nature of the specified event.<sup>21</sup> Although I have been referring to all of these as 3pl IMPs, some are more impersonal than others. Consider, for instance, the examples of 3pl IMPs in (37), which following Cabredo Hofherr (2003, 2006) I will refer to as the universal (37a), corporate (37b), vague (37c) and specific (37d) uses of the 3pl IMP, respectively.

- (37) a) In Spain, they eat dinner late.  
b) They changed the tax laws last year.  
c) They've found his bike in the back of a barn.



d) They're inviting us to a party.

Both the universal (37a) and corporate (37b) differ from the vague (37c) and specific (37d) 3pl IMPs in identifying the nature of the group to which the referent of the subject belongs, namely the people in Spain in (37a) and the government in (37b). No such identification of the referent of the subject is provided in (37c) or (37d). Constructions such as (37a) and (37b) are therefore termed by Langacker (2006) semi-impersonal as opposed to the full impersonal (37c) and (37d). The two semi-impersonal constructions differ from each other with respect to how the referent of the subject is identified. In the universal the identification is by means of the locative phrase, in the corporate via the lexical effects stemming from the verb and its arguments. Further the universal differ from the other three types of impersonals in not being anchored in time. Unlike the corporate, vague and specific 3pl IMPs, the universal do not denote a specific event but rather a general truth or a property and as such resemble generics. The major difference between the two full impersonals, the vague and specific, is that the former indicate only that an event has taken place without any indication of the precise point in time when it occurred whereas the specific necessarily indicate a concrete point in time, generally the time of speech. Further while the actual event depicted in the vague 3pl IMP could have been performed by a single individual (e.g. *the bike* in (37c) could have been found by a single person), it is only in the case of the specific impersonal that the given individual is precisely a specific one, i.e. someone identifiable by the speaker (e.g. in the case of (37d) a colleague in the French department). As shown in (38) from Italian, the individual in question can even be someone subsequently identified as known not only to the speaker but also to the hearer.

(38) Italian (Cinque 1988: 543)

Prima hanno telefonato; mi pareva tua sorella

earlier have:3PL telephoned; me seemed your sister

“( \* Someone )/they telephoned earlier. It seemed to be your sister.”

Another type of impersonal is that found with typical speech act verbs such as *say* or *tell*, as in (1b) in section 1 which I repeat in (39).

(39) They say there's dragons guardin' the highsecurity vaults.

I mention this type as it is often the only example of a 3pl IMP cited in reference grammars.

Of the above types of 3pl IMPs neither the universal nor the impersonal with speech act verbs constitutes a promising source of passives; the universal is restricted in its generic usage and the patient in speech act verbs is too abstract to warrant being treated as topical and thus to justify reanalysis. The other three types of impersonals are more promising inputs to a passive reanalysis. I suggest that such a reanalysis is, however, not tied to the existence of any single one of these three types of 3pl IMPs but rather is conditional on the occurrence of all three in a language. My motivation for this claim is that all the 3pl IMP constructions that are undergoing a passive reanalysis that I am aware of exhibit very few restrictions with respect to the referential properties of the agent. A wide variety of possible agents is somewhat unexpected if the input to the respective reanalyses were to be just any one of the three type of 3pl IMPs but is fully commensurate with the properties of all three. Together the three types of impersonals allow for a wide spectrum of agents: a loosely identified group (corporate), a fully unidentified group or individual (vague) and a specific individual (specific), even one well known to the addressee. If we accept the above reasoning and take the existence in a language of all three types of 3pl IMPs, the corporate, vague and specific,

to be a precondition for a passive reanalysis, we may have the beginning of an explanation for why passives originating from 3pl IMPs are not as common a phenomenon as one might expect. Although 3pl IMPs are widely distributed cross-linguistically, the three types may not co-occur all that often.

The investigation of 3pl IMPs in the languages of Europe conducted by Siewierska & Papastathi (2008), the only cross-linguistic investigation of 3pl IMPs I am aware of, reveals that corporate and vague impersonals are quite widely attested, but the specific ones are considerably less so. Their study, based on the acceptability judgements of 132 native speakers of nine European languages elicited by questionnaire, reveals that 3pl IMPs are completely acceptable, in Spanish, Italian, Greek and Hungarian, especially under the specific indefinite as opposed to the definite readings. By contrast 3pl specific IMPs are completely unacceptable in French and at best marginal in English, Dutch, German and Polish. These findings are shown in figures 1 and 2. Figure 1 represents the acceptability judgments of the use of a 3pl IMP with an underlying indefinite specific referent (e.g. a colleague from the French department) and figure 2 with an underlying definite referent (e.g. your sister, as in (38)). The number of speakers tested for each language is as follows: Dutch=14; English=10; French=19; German=17; Greek=17; Hungarian=16; Italian=9; Polish=16; Spanish=14.

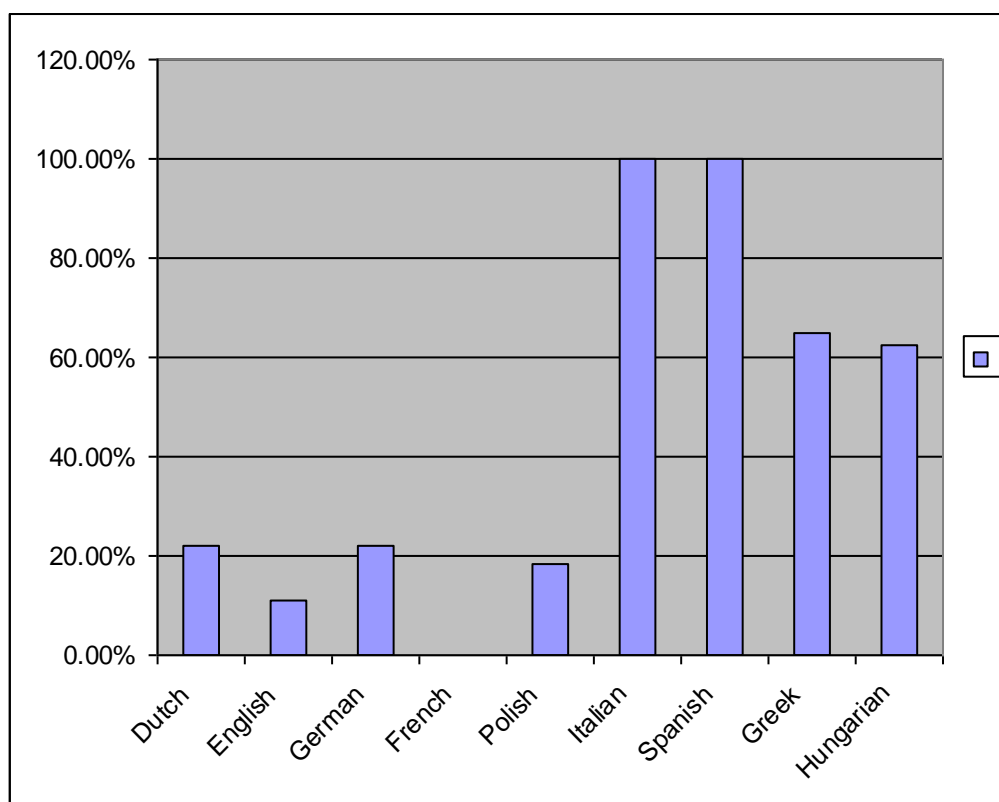


Figure 1

High acceptability ratings of specific 3pl IMPs; the referent is subsequently identified as being specific indefinite, e.g. *a student*

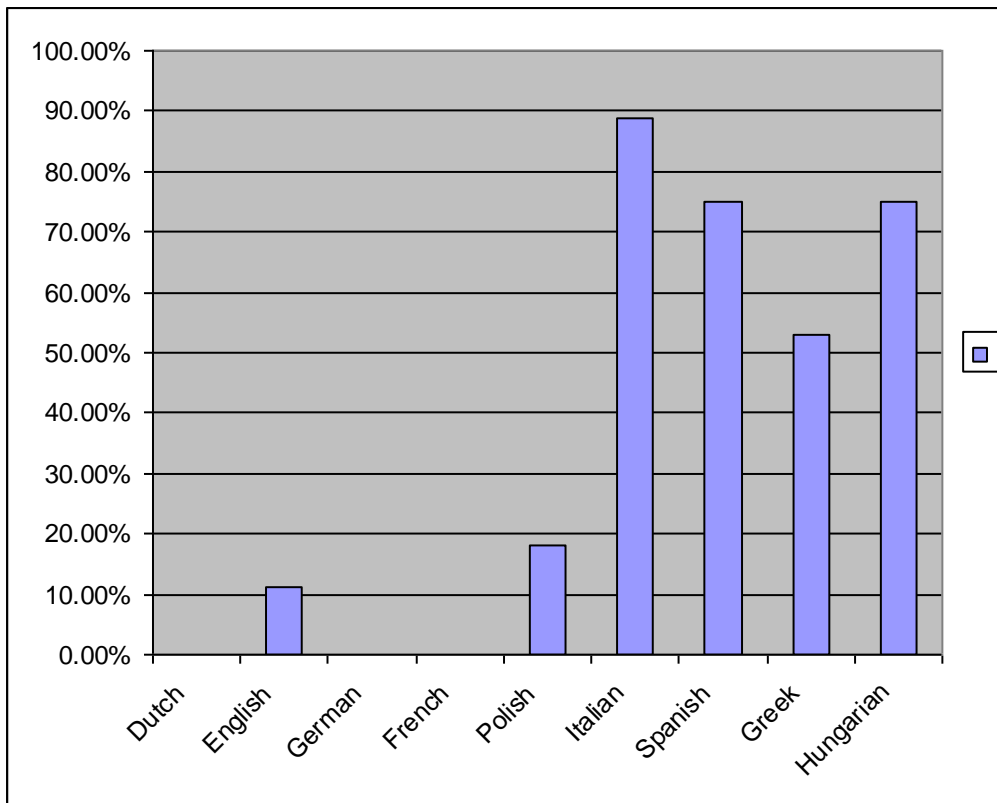


Figure 2

High acceptability ratings of specific 3pl IMPs; the referent is subsequently identified as being definite, e.g. *your mother*

Of course findings based on European languages cannot be assumed to automatically hold for languages in other parts of the world. But nor can they be dismissed unless there are good reasons to suggest that they are somehow specific to the languages of Europe. There are no such reasons in the case of 3pl IMPs. On the contrary. It is hardly surprising that it is precisely the individual and specific reading of the referent of a 3pl IMP that is less common than the group and unspecified one as the individual specific reading is the furthest removed from what is normally associated with the third person plural. My contention that such an individual and specific reading provides a stepping stone to a passive reanalysis is more

controversial. It does, however, account for the fact that all of the languages which allow for an overt agent in the relevant passives permit specific and definite agents. Moreover, it is not difficult to imagine how exactly the specific reading should feed into the passive reanalysis, namely via predicates used to depict events which are primarily or at least often patient- rather than agent-centred. In English and many other languages one such predicate is *to bear* in the sense of ‘to give birth’ which is more often than not used in the passive *to be born*. In the absence of a passive construction the 3pl IMP is an alternative, as in (40) through (42).

- (40) Omani Arabic: Hidd dialect (Holes 1998:359)

Wlidoni        fi        l-’uzal  
 give birth:3Pl to:1SG in Uzal  
 “They gave birth to me in Uzal.”

- (41) Ewe (Heine and Reh 1984:99)

Wo-dzi    Kofi  
 3PL-bear   Kofi  
 “They bore Kofi./ Kofi was born.”

- (42) Lewo (Early 1994:323, 324)

Pogos napa    a-    si        yemerava  
 TIME REL    3PL-create   world  
 “When they [God] created the world./When the world was created [by God].”

Once the 3pl IMP is used in a language for a clearly patient-centred event with this one predicate, the door is open for the construction to be extended to other predicates. Whether it

is thus extended will undoubtedly depend on a multiplicity of factors. The existence of a 3pl specific IMP in a language is just one of them, but a crucial one.

In sum, a 3pl IMP to passive reanalysis is dependent on the existence in a language of a variety of 3pl IMP constructions among which is the specific 3pl IMP. It is this type of 3pl IMP which provides the stepping stone for a passive reanalysis via its use in constructions depicting patient-centred events involving individual and specific agents, the prime example of which is *to be born*. And once a 3pl IMP is used in constructions depicting such events, as is the case in (40) to (42), it may be viewed as an incipient passive.

## 5. Concluding remarks

In embarking on this investigation I set out to answer two main questions, whether passives based on 3pl IMPs ever develop into promotional and even canonical ones and why the 3pl-to-passive diachronic pathway appears to be such a rare source of passive constructions. In relation to the first issue, we have seen that passives originating from 3pl IMPs do indeed grammaticalize into promotional and even canonical passives, be it infrequently. The full subjectivization of the patient is most likely in languages in which bound morphology does not constitute an obstacle to reanalysis, i.e. in languages which make no morphological distinction between the O of a transitive clause and the S of a passive one, namely languages which manifest neutral, ergative or active as opposed to accusative morphological alignment. The possibility of overtly expressing an agent does not appear to have any morphosyntactic correlates but rather to be tied to the existence of alternative agentive passives in a language or to contact with languages which have such passives. In either case it is possible to detect the influence of analogy. That 3pl IMPs may be sources of promotional passives especially in

languages with ergative and active morphological alignment is of special interest as such languages are normally seen as disfavouring or even lacking passive constructions. The reanalysis of 3pl IMPs has not been previously considered as a potential source of passives in such languages. As for the second issue, the infrequency of passives originating from 3pl IMPs relative to the cross-linguistic commonality of 3pl IMP constructions, I have argued that not all 3pl IMPs are equally likely sources of passives. 3pl IMPs which are essentially used in generic contexts and/or are restricted to speech act verbs are not promising inputs to reanalysis. Reanalysis requires that 3pl IMPs be used in episodic contexts and with different types of agents, among them individual and specific ones. In other words, reanalysis is predicated on high grammaticalization of the 3pl IMP construction itself. If such highly grammaticalized 3pl IMPs are not that frequent cross-linguistically, as the European data of Siewierska & Papastathi (2008) suggest, then we may have an explanation why 3pl IMPs are not as frequent a source of passives as one might expect. Whether this is indeed so, only future research can determine.

In considering the above, I also subjected to scrutiny the diachronic scenario involved in the 3pl-to-passive reanalysis as posited originally by Givón and subsequently assumed in much typological and cross-linguistic work. I hope to have shown that the diachronic changes posited are in the main contingent to the nature of Bantu and languages with similar morpho-syntactic characteristics rather than intrinsic to the reanalysis per se. It appears that the only factor common to all the cases of reanalysis that I have managed to identify is the reanalysis of the 3pl marker as a passive marker. None of the other aspects of Givón's scenario, left-dislocation of the patient, development of an agent phrase and reanalysis of an object person marker as a subject one are necessary, though they may reflect different stages of a grammaticalization path in individual languages. The first two aspects, left-dislocation and agent expression, do indeed often occur but are independent of each other; there are



languages in which the patient is topicalized but do not allow for the possibility of an overt agent (e.g. Vitu), languages in which there is overt agent expression but no patient topicalization (e.g. Coptic), languages which have both (e.g. the Bantu) and languages which have neither (e.g. Maa). The third aspect of Givón's scenario reanalysis of the object person marker as a subject one has yet to be documented. In the languages where full subjectivization of the patient appears to have taken place (Koasati, Kaqichel and potentially Cavineña) there has been no need for reanalysis of the object marker by virtue of the ergative or active alignment manifested by the languages in question. In the Bantu languages, the reanalysis does not yet appear to have taken place. We can assume that it has occurred when we see the Bantu object prefixes in the relevant passive clauses being used like typical subject ones, i.e. not only as anaphoric pronouns or resumptive pronouns in left-dislocations but as subject agreement markers with overt, especially first and second person subjects, and even focal ones. In outlining his diachronic scenario of how 3pl IMPs develop into passives Givón appears to have been sketching a possible pathway not a blue-print. It is time this be recognised and variations on the scenario be seriously explored.

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<sup>1</sup> A good deal of the research for this paper was carried out during my summer stay at the Max Planck Institute of Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig in 2008. I would like to express my gratitude to Bernard Comrie and Martin Haspelmath for inviting me and enabling me to utilise the resources of the Institute.

<sup>2</sup> The following abbreviations are used in this paper: A=transitive subject; abs=absolutive; acc=accusative; cl=classifier; dat= dative; dec=declarative; def= definite; DS=different subject; e=ergative; fem=feminine; f=feminine; gen= genitive; FV=final vowel; indef=indefinite; impfv=imperfective; inter=interrogative; lgr=lower pitch grade (a form of the stem); m=masculine; n=neuter; nom=nominative; O= object; obl=oblique; part= participle; pass=passive; pfv=perfective; pl=plural; prep=preposition; prog=progressive; R.past=remote past; refl=reflexive; rel= relative marker; S=intransitive subject; sg=singular; subj=subject; tns=tense.

<sup>3</sup> 3pl Imps may also be considered to be impersonal under the subject-centred view of impersonality if impersonality is associated not with the lack of a subject, which is typically the case, but rather the absence of a canonical subject, under the understanding that only referential subjects are canonical (see e.g. Creissels 2007; Siewierska 2008).

<sup>4</sup> The /i/ suffix in Maa can, however, be interpreted as still conveying plurality in certain constructions. See Payne et al. (1994) for discussion. It also needs to be pointed out that there is some unclarity whether the origin of the current passive marker was a 3pl form or just a plural form used in the third person. Greenberg's (1959:173-174) original analysis involved the latter.

<sup>5</sup> It needs to be noted that in earlier publications (see e.g. Givón 1976:180; 1979:188; 1990:606) Givón strongly implied that the Kimbundu passive was a promotional one. Only more recently has its non-promotional nature been acknowledged, especially in comparison to that of Lunda, to be discussed further below.

<sup>6</sup> The development of reflexive and participial impersonals into full promotional passives and also of passives back into active impersonals especially in Romance, Slavonic and even Scandinavian languages has been much discussed. See, for instance, Sanso (2009), Lavine (2005) and Maling and Sigurjónsdóttir (2002).

<sup>7</sup> According to Cinque (1988) in the case of the so called existential 3pl IMPs the argument in question is necessarily agentive but not in the case of the so-called generic or universal 3pl IMPs.

<sup>8</sup> The patient prominent nature of the passive holds for what is usually taken to be the canonical construction as characterized in (7). In languages which have several passives, some may diverge from this canon as discussed and illustrated, for example, in Sansó (2006).

<sup>9</sup> A notable exception is Shibatani (1985) who omits the agent from what he takes to be the passive prototype.

<sup>10</sup> The relevant marker in question in the Muskogean languages is *-ho/-oh* which was considered a 3pl marker by Hass (1946) but is now variously analyzed, as a distributive marker in Koasati by Kimball (1991: 136), an impersonal plural by Martin (2000) and simply a passive by Nathan (1977:124). Whether it should be considered as an actual third person plural, even diachronically, is not clear. I have included the relevant constructions for completeness.

<sup>11</sup> The constructions which I am considering as potential passives in the Nilotic languages are typically viewed as “passive equivalents”. Most take the prefix or suffix /i-/-i/ or /ki-/-ki/. Languages other than those mentioned in (9) which also exhibit this suffix include: Acholi (Bavin 1989), Arusa (Levergood 1987:40-1), Kalenjin (Toweet 1979: 234-239) and Lotuko (Heine and Claudi 1986: 81).

<sup>12</sup> The passive *-kɛ* suffix has been dropped here. It is only indicated by the tone on the stem. According to Crazzolara (1933:147) such dropping of the passive suffix is frequent.

<sup>13</sup> Kaqchikel has two other passive constructions in addition to the *ki*-passive, which will be illustrated further below.

<sup>14</sup> The agreement marking in Itelmen, as in other languages of the Chukotko-Kamchatkan family, is somewhat complex, the prefixal forms being determined by the subject and the suffixal by the object and also intransitive subject. However, the actual phonetic form of the suffixes for the intransitive subject and object is different, at least for the first and second person. The system is sometimes seen as a special type of split ergative alignment (see e.g. Bobaljik 2000).

<sup>15</sup> The passive marker in Vitu has three allomorphs, vowel mutation, replacement of verbs ending in a *-Ci* suffix by a *-Ca* suffix and addition of the suffix *-(a)nga*. Only the last of these allomorphs is diachronically related to a 3pl. An *(a)nga* suffix is still used as a pluralizer for the third person in the very closely related language Bali.

<sup>16</sup> Van den Berg gives very few examples of passives with the suffix *-(a)nga* in Vitu all of which feature a preverbal nominal singular patient. Therefore, I cannot illustrate the discussed difference in agreement. It is not absolutely clear whether the difference in question has been observed with passives marked by the *-(a)nga* allomorph.

<sup>17</sup> This example is somewhat less convincing than it could be due to the fact that there is no actual 3pl- passive marking of the infinitive. This is understandable if the 3pl is still a person marker, but not if it is already a passive, which is what the presence of the agent phrase suggests.

<sup>18</sup> I am assuming that the 3pl-to-passive reanalysis requires the 3pl marker to be bound to the verb. Therefore in this scenario I have disregarded the possibility of a language having no agreement.

<sup>19</sup> Given that both patient topicalization and the overt presence of an agent are indications of a departure from a normal 3pl IMP construction, one might expect agent phrases to be particularly likely in languages in which the patient does not change its location in the passive. Yet this does not appear to be so.

<sup>20</sup> The presence of the agent phrase in Itelmen may also be at least partially attributable to the influence of the other Chukotko-Kamchatkan languages, all of which, apart from Itelmen display ergative case marking; the locative/instrumental marking of the agent is very reminiscent of the ergative marking of the transitive subject.

<sup>21</sup> An overview of the typologies of 3pl Imps that have been proposed in the literature and a detailed explanation of the alleged types is provided in Siewierska & Papastathi (2008).